

## *Iraq*

This year we welcomed the news that our troops will be coming home from Iraq just in time to celebrate the Holidays with their families. Our troops have been asked to remain in Iraq for too long, and I look forward to their return in the swiftest, safest possible manner.

It has been a long eight years in Iraq, which have taken a heavy toll on our service members and their families. We have lost lives that have left young families without fathers and mothers, parents without children, and our nation without some of our heroes.

The Iraq War also forced our nation to divert limited resources from the conflict in Afghanistan, and wavered the strong unity and support of our partners to face a post-9/11 world. As a further consequence, our nation racked up an expensive bill for waging this misguided war that today has added more than \$800 billion to our nation's deficit.

After close to nine years of war in Iraq—and close to a decade of fighting in Afghanistan—it has become crystal clear that military might alone cannot secure peace. Diplomatic and humanitarian interventions are cost-effective, proven ways to decrease the duration of conflict, bring lasting security to war-torn areas, and minimizes the devastating impacts to our service members.

I never supported the use of military force in Iraq, and I consistently voted against the war since the Bush Administration first deployed troops in 2003, but I did remain committed to supporting our men and women in uniform. And now that they are finally coming home—more than ever—they will need for us to be there to meet them with the benefits and the opportunities they deserve and have earned. It doesn't matter if you agree or disagree on the Iraq War; our service members deserve nothing less than our full support.

## *Afghanistan*

I have consistently opposed the war in Afghanistan, and my opposition remains unwavering. From day one, I was skeptical about what our military could accomplish in that country. The past ten years have shown that invading and occupying Afghanistan has been a monumental foreign policy blunder that has cost thousands of lives, squandered billions of dollars, and done little to improve our national security.

This year, I repeatedly continued to vote to fix our failed policies by eliminating all funds for war except those used for troop safety and withdrawal. During debate on the Defense Appropriations bill in July, I voted for Representative Barbara Lee's amendment, which would have cut funds for the war in Afghanistan. While I am disappointed this amendment failed, we must continue to work for a responsible way to end this war. For this reason, I also cosponsored the Afghanistan Exit and Accountability Act (H.R. 1735). This important bipartisan legislation would require the President to define how and when US military operations will be transferred to Afghan authorities, which will finally allow our troops to return home to their families. Make no

mistake about it: I firmly support our men and women in uniform. For this reason, we must bring them home from a battlefield with no real hope of military victory.

While I am encouraged that President Obama set July 2011 as the beginning of US military redeployment, we must be vigilant about maintaining that timeframe. Political and military leaders agree on this, but we need to turn that agreement into action. Until we can sustain peace, our military's prowess alone will never be sufficient.

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